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SUBJECT: CANADA SEEKS DEDICATED HELICOPTER AND UAV SUPPORT  
IN RC-S

REF: OTTAWA 2069

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons: 1.4 (d) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: The Canadian government is lobbying European NATO partners to provide dedicated helicopter and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) support in the Kandahar region of Regional Command - South (RC-S) in Afghanistan. Canada's military has no organic capability of this type, despite an ongoing program to equip the Canadian Forces (CF). Meanwhile, combat deaths and injuries -- due in part to lack of aviation assets -- erode public and political support for the mission. With diminishing prospects for help from other NATO partners, Canada would welcome U.S. helicopter support for the CF operating in the RC-S, and, during the visit of State Department Counselor and DASD Shivers (septel) also sought U.S. assistance in expediting delivery of MQ-9 Predator B UAVs once the Canadian procurement bureaucracy authorizes their purchase. Regardless of how well PM Harper manages the Parliamentary vote -- likely by spring 2008 -- on the CF future in Afghanistan, as well as scrutiny on procurement practices, Canada would definitely welcome our help in upgrading these capabilities. End summary.

12. (C/RelCan) Canada under Prime Minister Stephen Harper is committed to transforming and re-equipping the CF and to reforming defense procurements to ensure greater speed. Despite recent improvements, it will be two to three years before Canada is able to field its own helicopters in Afghanistan, and a year or more before it is able to procure and deploy high-end UAVs. Both systems are necessary to reduce risk and enhance targeting in the restive Kandahar region. As Canadian lobbying of European NATO partners for combat helicopter support and interim UAV coverage has so far failed to produce results, Canada now is looking to the U.S. for help and also seeking assurances that, once its bureaucracy authorizes helicopter and UAV procurements, the U.S. will work with industry to expedite delivery.

War Politics  
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13. (SBU) The current six-month rotation of front-line combat troops led to the deployment in August of the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment ("Vandoos") in Afghanistan. Six Vandoos have been killed since July, bringing total Canadian deaths in Afghanistan to 73 soldiers and one diplomat. The single most important cause of Canadian casualties has been

road-side Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks on convoys delivering supplies to forward operating bases. 24 of 26 deaths in the past 12 months were attributed to IEDs.

¶4. (S/NF) Troops involved in CF re-supply missions are forced to use, and to re-use, similar tactics, techniques, and procedures in Afghanistan due to their lack of organic UAV and helicopter capability. This presents the insurgents with relatively predictable targets. The government faces heated political exposure to accusations that it does not provide troops with adequate force protection. This argument undermines popular and political support for the deployment.

#### Helicopters

¶5. (S/NF) Canada has developed a procurement case for 16 Chinooks, but it has been delayed because the Canada-specific QChinooks, but it has been delayed because the Canada-specific CH-47F "Plus" is not yet in production. If Canada and Boeing sign a contract as expected in February 2008, aircraft delivery will occur from 2011 through 2013.

¶6. (C) In the meantime, Canada is asking NATO partners to deploy helicopters to support the CF in Kandahar. According to Department of National Defence (DND) planners, Canadian forces have significant, persistent airlift requirements:

- personnel mobility: 265 passenger movements per week;
- general cargo: delivery of up to 10,000 kgs per day;
- M777 howitzer and ammunition, moved every 2-4 weeks;
- MEDEVAC: 24/7 as required;
- emergency re-supply and parts delivery: 24/7 as required;
- reconnaissance for future operations: as required.

Any expeditious command arrangement would do, DND officials

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tell us, as long as there is dedicated 24/7 air support available to meet the CF's urgent needs in RC-S.

¶7. (C) Canadian officials have already asked both Germany and Poland to deploy combat-capable rotary-wing aircraft to southern Afghanistan in support of Canadian NATO-ISAF operations. Minister of Defence Peter MacKay told Counselor of the Department Cohen and DASD Shivers on November 14 that if they want the Canadian Parliament to concur in extending the CF deployment in Kandahar after February 2009, NATO partners should move quickly to find ways to deliver enablers such as dedicated helicopters, UAVs, and other "tech support" to RC-S. These deliverables would have a profound psychological and practical effect on Canadians, he underlined.

¶8. (C) MacKay explained that Canada had not given up on its requests for helicopters in RC-S from Germany and Poland. Poland had "said all the right things" but had not followed through, he said, while Germany was still weighing options to deploy without breaking its unhelpful caveats.

¶9. (S/NF) MacKay added that Canada and Germany had also been discussing the possible deployment of German rotary wing airlift to RC-S as soon as early 2008 (reftel). One scenario would include temporary deployments of German-crewed CH-53 aircraft from northern Afghanistan to RC-S in a combat support role. Another scenario would have Canadian or "NATO multilateral" crews flying German CH-53 aircraft in RC-S. In follow-up conversation on November 20 with poloff, however, a senior Department of National Defence (DND) official admitted that the initiative was now on "life support and would soon die."

#### Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

¶10. (S/NF) In a separate meeting with Dr. Cohen and DASD Shivers, Chair of the Panel on the Future Role of Canada in Afghanistan and former Liberal Deputy Prime Minister John

Manley asked if the U.S. government would be willing to help Canada expedite the procurement of General Atomic MQ-9 Predator Bs. He predicted that his Panel's report (due in January 2008) would likely suggest specific enhancements before Canada commits to extending the CF's combat presence in RC-S. Among them -- if General Atomic and the USG could assure Canada of its early delivery -- would be the MQ-9 Predator B, due in part to its utility in detecting and destroying teams planting IEDs. During a subsequent meeting, Foreign and Security Adviser to the Prime Minister Keith Fountain also raised the Predator, asking Dr. Cohen and DASD Shivers if delivery to the CF would be "doable" before 2009. (General Atomic officials recently told DATT that they could deliver MQ-9 Predator Bs and ground stations before 2009 if Canada moved swiftly to place orders and, critically, to begin crew training.)

¶11. (S/NF) The CF currently operates French-made SPERWER tactical UAVs, which are capable of only minimal coverage - 8 hours per day. Only two of the original 13 SPERWERS have survived the Afghan mission. The CF launched procurement of the MQ-9 Predator B in 2006 because it was the only aircraft that met its requirement of 24/7 coverage. The Predator Q that met its requirement of 24/7 coverage. The Predator procurement was stymied in February 2007 by complaints about sole source acquisitions. (Comment: the government's direct and FMS procurements of four C-17, 17 C-130Js, and 16 CH-47Fs from the U.S. were as much as the political atmosphere could tolerate at one time. End Comment.) Instead, DND put a less capable interim intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) solution out for competitive bid. According to DND sources, the government was under pressure from Canadian business concerns to purchase an inferior Israeli product, which was being "shoved down our throats."

Comment  
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¶12. (S/NF) PM Harper's appointment of the Manley Panel was a shrewd political maneuver that at once delayed public discussion of the Afghan Mission and provided an opportunity for some creative thinking. Breaking the political and

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policy logjams in the way of the MQ-9 Predator B procurement could be one of its most important contributions to the future of the CF in Afghanistan, but Canada will need our help on this. Over the next few months, Canada will use the various pre-Bucharest venues to continue to press allies to deploy helicopters and UAVs, as well as maneuver forces, to the Kandahar region, but at this point Canadian officials believe that the Europeans' likely reaction will be a letdown. Regardless of how well Harper manages the Parliamentary vote -- likely by spring 2008 -- on the CF future in Afghanistan as well as scrutiny of procurement practices, Canada could use our help in upgrading its capabilities.

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